



The Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers, Inc. (MARP) is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit corporation established in 1973 to improve passenger train service, travel conditions for passengers, and to work for the preservation of historic rail stations.

Monthly meetings are held at locations around the state. Check the website for dates and venues. The public is invited to attend.

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The Michigan Passenger Editor and Webmaster, Larry Sobczak
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2017 MEETINGS

14 January – REO Town Depot (former Grand Trunk Depot), Lansing
18 February – 1st Methodist Church, Kalamazoo
18 March – Clinton Northern Railway Museum, St. Johns
22 April – Grand Trunk Pub, Detroit
13 May – Chicago Union Station
10 June – Executive Committee
15 July – Traverse City
August – Bangor
23 September – Annual Meeting at Durand Union Station
October – tentative Grand Rapids
November – tentative SE Michigan
December – Executive Committee

Visit www.marp.org
Email marprail@yahoo.com

Pacific Northwest Rail Summit *a report*

“Supply the vision, oppose badly designed projects, and advocate for the good projects!” That was the challenge laid down to a group of passenger rail and rail transit advocates gathered in Seattle on May 6. The conference, jointly sponsored by **All Aboard Washington** (AAWA) and the **Rail Users' Network** (RUN), brought together advocates from around the country to experience the vitality of public transportation in one of the fastest growing regions in the country, gain insights from the successes and challenges of advocacy efforts in other regions, share best practices and learn about projects currently moving forward or planned for the future.

The session was kicked off by Lloyd Flem, who described himself as the “lightly paid” executive director of AAWA, a post he has held for 31 years. Over the years, AAWA has “praised and pushed” to develop the highly successful passenger rail service Washington state enjoys. A key element in this success is the bi-partisan, bi-cameral **Legislative Rail Caucus** (LRC) that he helped form in 2012. The success of the caucus, in turn, springs from working closely with groups such as the **Pacific Northwest Economic Region** (PNWER), a statutory public / private nonprofit created in 1991 by five western states and five Canadian Provinces. AAWA annually **hosts a luncheon for members of the LRC**, other lawmakers and representatives of rail workers and industry.

Rep. Luis Moscoso, AAWA’s vice-president and one of the original leaders of the Rail Caucus, spoke about the importance of grassroots advocacy organizations in educating and mobilizing the public. He said, “You give us the leverage we need” to advance rail interests.

Land use issues came up in more than one of the presentations during the day. Ron Pate, WSDOT Rail Division Manager, told of 200 cancelled trains this year due to landslides and highlighted the need for better storm water management and policies that avoid conflicts resulting from incompatible land development practices.

State Senator Maralyn Chase said that a “robust group of people behind us” is needed to move forward the study of high-speed rail now underway.

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NO MEMBER MEETING IN JUNE

The Executive Committee will have a planning session on **June 10, from 10 a.m – 2 p.m. in the lower level of the Capital Area District Library, 401 S. Capitol Ave., Lansing.**

Contact Steve Vagnozzi for further information.
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Photo by John DeLora

On the QLINE

By John DeLora

Detroit's new streetcar, dubbed "The QLINE," opened on May 12th. The following Monday was a nice day, so I decided to take a ride on it. I boarded at Woodward and Milwaukee, where the station is an island stop in the center of Woodward. Being brand new, it was sparkling clean, with instructions at the ticketing machine available in English and Spanish. No need for tickets, though, since there was a poster announcing free rides for the first week.

After about a 10-minute wait, the white and sea-green streetcar rolled up, nearly silent. The streetcar is composed of three articulated units, with large windows. The interior has plain but comfortable seats, with leather straps for standees.

Shortly after Amsterdam Street, the train begins running in the right traffic lane. There were a surprising number of people boarding and many photographers were seen along the way. The ride was quite smooth, with just a modest bit of track noise. The motorman is separated from the passengers by a security door which has a sign "Do not distract driver."



Photo by John DeLora



Photo by John DeLora

It has been a while since I have driven down Woodward, and the amount of new construction was impressive. The trip ended at Larned St, where the motorman announced that all passengers had to exit the train. After changing the pantographs for northbound running, and waiting about ten minutes, it proceeded on its northbound trip.

The QLINE operates daily. Hours are Monday-Thursday 6:00am-11:00pm, Friday 6:00am-Midnight, Saturdays 8:00am-Midnight, and Sundays 8:00am- to 8:00pm. A single ride is \$1.50; an all-day pass is \$3.00, with monthly and annual passes available.

MARP at Chicago Union Station

Some fifty MARP members and friends gathered at Chicago Union Station on May 13. Members arriving on the *Wolverine* reported only slight delay, but our friends from Wisconsin were delayed by an unfortunate juxtaposition of their *Hiawatha* train and an auto at a crossing.

Martin Bloedt, Sales and Product Manager Locomotives, Siemens Industry Inc., gave a most interesting presentation on the SC-44 Charger locomotives that are currently on order or being delivered to the Midwest, California, Washington, Pennsylvania and Maryland. Manufactured at the Siemens plant in Sacramento with American-made components from suppliers across the country, including Cummins, Inc., in Indiana which built the diesel-electric motors, testing of the locomotives on Michigan routes took place on April 30 and May 2 and 4.

Laura Kliever gave a slide presentation on the **Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission (MIPRC)**, for which she serves as Director. MIPRC is a formal compact among nine Midwestern states, established to promote, coordinate and support passenger rail improvements in the region. She detailed **accomplishments of the last several years** and gave a preview of the next phase which will produce a 40-year

framework for the Midwest intercity passenger rail network, including a prioritization of corridors and investment projects, a governance structure, and funding strategy. MARP members can register as "interested parties" to follow the FRA-led study. Visit MidwestRailPlan.org.

Greg Godfrey, Assistant Superintendent Train Movement for Amtrak's Central Region, led a tour of the **Joseph C. Szabo Chicago Control Center**. One of five control centers in the country, it oversees nearly 510 train movements carrying almost 130,000 people daily in Chicago Union Station, on Amtrak's and MDOT's Michigan lines, and in New Orleans.

Tim Schmidt, Amtrak R&I Agent, then led the group through the well-appointed new Metropolitan Lounge and other refurbished areas of Union Station.

Save The Date!

*The July membership meeting will be held on Saturday, July 15, 10 AM-Noon, at the Traverse Area District Library in Traverse City. Tyler Bevier (BATA Transportation Planner) will talk about transit service in the bay area. The Groundwork Center will give an update on the A2TC (Ann Arbor to Traverse City) inter-city rail project. If you plan to stay overnight, book now for best rates. **Baymont Inn & Suites Traverse City** has reasonably priced accommodations.*

We need to hear from you You Know Who You Are !

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(SUMMIT continued from page 1)

She also made mention of the **Solutionary Rail** project, a bold proposal to electrify America's railroads. Electrification came up later in the day when another speaker opined that electrification will not happen until fossil fuels become more costly.

Josh Coran, Director of Operations for Talgo, Inc., recognizes the difficulty of finding the capital to address the deficiencies in rail infrastructure. In the meantime, he urges making the best use of what we have, touting the superior performance of Talgo equipment on existing infrastructure.

The Puget Sound region is completing a number of infrastructure projects funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, with much of the activity taking place in the Tacoma area. A new station at Freighthouse Square will soon have 12 daily Cascades trains with the addition of another daily round trip. Eight Siemens Charger locomotives are being delivered. The LED lights on the locomotives are problematic in the yard. Ron Pate, WSDOT Rail Division, is working with partners to develop standards for the lights.

Students at Central Washington University in Ellensburg recently completed an assessment of demand for restored service on the Stampede Pass route (former Northern Pacific) though the Yakima Valley to Pasco WA. The project was directed by John Bowen, Geology Department Chair. Surveys were conducted at supermarkets and on Facebook, the latter garnering "tremendous interest". The students were originally lukewarm about the project, but became increasingly engaged as they researched the history of the passenger train service on this route that ended in 1981.

The final presentation of the day had information that could be useful to the next ballot issue to arise in Michigan. Abigail Doerr, Advocacy Director for **Transportation Choices Coalition**, highlighted the strategies used in the successful **Mass Transit Now!** 2016 campaign to approve \$54 B for expansion of Sound Transit. This will add 62 miles of light rail to the system, establish new BRT routes and add service on existing routes.

The conference was preceded on May 5 with tours of the many transit options available in Seattle. See page four.

SMART Buses Can Return to Troy's Amtrak Station

Reprinted from Detroit Free Press June 7, 2017

With the signing of a detailed court order this week, the city of Troy and a prominent Oakland County developer momentarily stated that -- in effect -- they've put behind them nearly two decades of lawsuits over the star-crossed Troy Transit Center.

The immediate upshot is that SMART buses can resume picking up and dropping off riders at the site near Coolidge and Maple roads, where Amtrak passenger trains stop on their way to Detroit, Ann Arbor and Chicago, said a spokeswoman for metro Detroit's SMART bus system.

"We're very happy that the parties were able to reach an agreement without going to trial," said SMART communications manager Beth Gibbons -- not that the two sides hadn't already spent hundreds of hours in court time since their legal slugfest began in 1999.

The deal that Troy signed this week requires that the city, in return for permission to have buses serve its shiny Amtrak passenger station, must pay \$100,000 to developer Gary Sakwa and his Grand/Sakwa Properties, owners of a 75-acre shopping center and condominium complex that surrounds the transit center. That follows Sakwa's previous legal settlement concluded in 2015 that extracted from Troy a whopping \$4.15 million in federal transportation funds to buy the 2 acres under the center from Sakwa, whose ownership he claimed under previous legal rulings.

This month, at long last, the structure of brick, glass, concrete and aluminum -- built with a federal transportation grant -- can start to fulfill the hopes expressed years ago by a wide range of public policy players, including Gov. Rick Snyder and Troy's business leaders, for the unstaffed center to become an "inter-modal hub" of rail, bus and auto travel and the face of mass transit's future in southeast Michigan.



Save the Date!

MRC

Midwest Rail Conference

Aug. 15-17, 2017 • Kalamazoo, MI



Fetzer Center
Western Michigan University
2350 Business Court
Kalamazoo, MI 49008



CONFERENCE ORGANIZERS



Rail Transportation Program
Michigan State University



In Association With:



FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT
www.rail.mtu.edu/event/mrc2017

View from elsewhere . . .

"Advocacy can make the difference between the status quo and better rail service for everyone. By joining together, sharing information, best practices and resources...advocates have a better chance of occupying a vocal and meaningful seat at the decision making table that ultimately determines the quality of passenger rail and rail transit service."

—Richard Rudolph, Chair of **Rail Users' Network**, in current issue of RUN Newsletter.

"It certainly is a welcome step in the right direction. We've had so many challenges to mass transit in this region, but layer this [the return of SMART Bus service to the Troy Amtrak station] on top of the QLINE [Detroit's new streetcar] and Bike Share [the new self-renting bike program], and we're finally seeing more ways for people to get around."

—Megan Owens, executive director of Transportation Riders United (TRU), **quoted in Detroit Free Press article.**

Rally for Trains!

**Help Save Amtrak's National Network
June 23 & June 24 In A Community Near You
REGISTER TO HOST A RALLY**



A Feast of Transportation Choices

Every **Rail Users' Network** (RUN) conference features a tour of local transit. On May 5, Harvey Bowen, President of All Aboard Washington, led a merry band of advocates on a Seattle odyssey that included rides on Sound Transit's LINK (shown above) for its entire 21-mile length; the First Hill and South Lake Union Streetcars; a portion of the 83-mile Sounder commuter, going from downtown Seattle to Tacoma where easy connection was made to the Tacoma LINK streetcar; and capping the day with a ride on the Water Taxi to West Seattle and dinner. Steel wheels on steel rails (mostly!).



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